LOTUS LEAVES
FOR THE YOUNG
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LEGENDS AND TALES

BY

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LOTUS LEAVES FOR THE YOUNG

THIS series is written for the young by lovers of the young, that they may learn of "high thoughts and noble deeds," and so weave for their own young lives chaplets of fair blossoms wherewith to crown their manhood and womanhood Many a virtue is best learned by dwelling on a life which embodies it, for

> Lives of great men all remind us
> We can make our lives sublime,
> And, departing, leave behind us
> Footprints on the sands of time

The series will also contain teachings which form the foundations of character, and which, learned in youth, will prove a sure rock amid all the storms of life

That the booklets issued may be useful to those for whom they are planned is the hope with which they are sent out into the world

THE PUBLISHER

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FOREWORD

THESE stories were written many years ago, and had a wide circulation in their original form They are old-world tales re-told for modern children, and breathe the spirit which inspires to heroic action. The modern world has need of the self-sacrifice of Gangā, of the courage of Perseus, and its Helpers of to-morrow are among the young of to-day.

ANNIE BESANT

CONTENTS

	Page
Ganga, the River Maid	1
The Stealing of Persephone	6
The First Roses	10
The Drowning of the World	15
The Wandering Jew	19
Perseus, the Saviour	36
The Story of Hypatia	45

GAṄGA, THE RIVER MAID

A Legend of Aryavaeṭa

Far away, in the vast range of mountains that guards Aryavarṭa against invasions from the north, the great God Shiva lay asleep Around Him rose the sky-piercing, snow-capped peaks of the mighty Himalayas, and as He slept, His tangled hair, storm-tossed, wind driven, was played with by King Frost, and the snow maidens and ice-maidens of His court hung ice-drops on the hairs of head and face And Shiva slept for many a hundred years, for He was weary, and while He slept, the sun blazed down on the vast plains and slopes and valleys of His land and burned up cruelly the green herbs and glorious trees, for there were at that time no rivers to water the arid soil, and the people cried aloud to Shiva for water, and Shiva slept

Now in the mountains there lived a great King, Himavat, with his fair wife Mena, mother of winged Maināka, and of a lovely maiden, whom they named Gangā. As Ganga one day wandered through her

father's snowy realm, she came to a beautiful ice-cavern that she had never seen before. Long icicles hung from the glittering walls, pillars of ice held up the lofty roof, and as she stood at the mouth, peeping in timidly, a ray of sunlight flashed past her into the cavern, and painted its seven colours on point, and arch, and shaft Ganga clapped her white hands with delight, and ran into the cavern, and there she stayed, while they searched for her high and low, and never dreamed of looking in the tangles of Shiva's hair, wherein the exquisite ice cavern had been formed At last Himavat and Menā went to look for her, and chid her gently for her mischief when they found her but when she showed them the fairy cavern they forgave her, and the three made their home there for many a year

But one day Himavat returned from a journey, and his heart was heavy and his face sad "What ails you, King and husband?" whispered Menā quietly, and Gangī nestled on her father's knee, and wound her soft arms round his neck And the King spoke

"The land suffers grievously for want of water, the crops are shrivelled, the cattle are wasting, men and women try in vain to still the moaning of their little ones Shiva sleeps and heeds not the misery and there is no help in Gods for men"

He paused and no word broke the silence, yet hush! surely a soft breeze whispered through the

ice-cavern, from Ganga's golden hair dropped sweet water, as the ice-wreath wherewith she had crowned herself, slowly melted round her head Himavat looked at her and covered his face, and she whispered in his ears 'Is there no help for men?"

Then he raised his heavy eyes, tear-laden, and looked upon his child "Aye, Ganga, there is help, but it is hard to win If a maiden pure as ice and white as snow would leave her home, and go and dwell for ever in the sultry plains, then from her life freely given would flow life for the perishing people and her name would be sacred and beloved by all in Aryavarta"

And Ganga knew that her great father bade her take this work on her fair *shoulders*, but she turned away and hid herself in the recesses of her ice cavern, and would not go forth And ever the cry of the dying people went up to a sky like burnished brass, and their wail reached Gangā in her cavern, but still she would not move

And her father bade her go, and her mother weeping, prayed her to give her life for men, still Ganga would not move But one day Himavat came in, with a child dying in his arms, the soft skin was blistered with the heat, the little lips black and parched, the mouth open, the eyes fixed and glassy, and Himavat laid the child on Ganga's lap, and said, "It dies of thirst." As Ganga bent over the little face, a drop of water fell from her hair on the parched

lips, and the rose red colour flashed back into them, and the babe opened its eyes and laughed for joy. Ganga sprang to her feet

"Aye, I will go, father, mother, I will go to save the perishing people, and to bring joy to the little ones who die for lack of water"

And the beauty of a great sacrifice came into her face, as she turned to the mouth of the ice cavern, where she had dwelt in her innocent but selfish joy And as she left the cavern there was a change and the fair form melted away, and the golden bright hair and white hands vanished, and a stream of pure soft water, with white flecks of foam, danced over a bed of golden bright sand, and the water whispered as it ran "I am Ganga, Ganga, and I go to bless the thirsty plains, and to carry life to those dying for my stream"

And wherever Ganga turned, flowers sprang up to welcome her, and stately trees bowed over her waters, and fainting cattle grew strong as they stood knee-deep in her shallows, and children romped and played with her wavelets, and strong men bathed in her torrents, and fair women laved their bodies in her pools And Gangā the Maiden became Gangā the Mother, giver of life and joy and fertility to the broad plains of Āryāvarta

So the life that was given became the source of life throughout the great Hindu land, and as she rolls over towards the sea, Gangā murmurs to herself

"To give oneself for others is duty; to spread happiness around one's steps for others to gather up is truest joy."

And to this day the Hindū, dying afar off from the sacred river, prays that his ashes may be thrown into Gaṅgā's red-brown depths; and dying lips cry with their last breath, "Gangā, Ganga", and dying eyes fix their last look on Gangā's broad pure stream.

THE STEALING OF PERSEPHONE

A Legend of Greece

On the hills of Olympus was dispute. Zeus, the father of Gods and men sat listening on his throne; Eros lay weeping at his feet; Hera, the ox-eyed, sat gloomily in the background; Hermes stood by ready for flight, and listening eagerly to Pallas Athene, who vehemently urged on the assembled deities some decided course of action.

The circumstances were these: Demeter, the fruitful Earth-Goddess—called by the Latins Ceres, or Bona Dea, the good Goddess—had just embraced the knees of the cloud-compeller, and had craved his mighty aid, and she stood now waiting the answer to her appeal, and vowed by her corn and her golden fruit that famine should visit earth, and the high Gods fail of their accustomed offerings, if succour were not given her in her distress. For as her fair daughter Persephone wandered with her maidens over the plain of Enna, gathering the fragrant blossoms of that garden of Sicily, an earthquake had rent the ground at her

feet, and from the yawning gulf had uprisen Aides, the dark Ruler of the nether-world He had leapt from his chariot, drawn by four black horses from whose nostrils darted fire, and, clasping the shrieking maiden in his arms, had carried her in a whirlwind across hill and dale till he reached the Cyanian fount, and drove his chariot into the terrified waters, till they fled before the hoofs of his trampling steeds, and opened a way for him to pass into the dark Kingdom which he ruled Near this fount had Demeter found her daughter's veil, tear sodden, and Arethusa the nymph revealed to her the theft committed by dark Aides, and the place of her sad child's abode, for Aides had wedded Persephone, sore weeping, and she dwelt now in the dim Elysian fields, and bewailed the fair sunshine and the cool, soft airs of earth.

Thus had spoken Demeter, loud lamenting, and in vain had Zeus striven to win her favour for her enforced son-in-law, the mighty King of the Shades and of all the dead Then had grey-eyed Pallas Athene pleaded the mother's cause, and in her wisdom she advised that if no food grown in the dim twilight of Aides' realms had passed the earthly lips of Persephone, she should be free to re ascend to the upper world and dwell as before in her mother's home And as she spoke Zeus bowed his mighty head, and Olympus shook and trembled at the awful sign of confirmation

So Demeter fled earthwards in her dragon-chariot, and descended into the twilight and sought Aides in his gloomy halls But lo! Persephone, as she walked through the Elysian fields, had seen a pomegranate, red and luscious, and, plucking, she had eaten thereof a seed ere she cast it from her in loathing, remembering the soil on which it grew Therefore the mother returned weeping, and hid herself away from all men's eyes Then famine spread her dark wings over the land, and the corn withered ere it was grown, and the fruit dropped unripened to the ground, for the mighty heart of the Earth Goddess was crushed within her, and her face was turned away from the land she had made fertile with her smile

At length Zeus called to him Hermes, the swift-footed messenger of the Gods, and he bade him haste to Demeter and bid her seek Aides once again, and pray him to set his fair wife free six months out of each rolling year, so that she might dwell in the light with her mother awhile, and then again brighten with her presence the gloomy shades below, and if Aides would listen to this prayer then would Zeus, as dowry for blue eyed Persephone, bestow on her lord the fair Sicilian Island where his eyes had first rested on the maid So Hermes, wing footed, hastened to Demeter, and bade her once again seek to bring her daughter home And again Demeter sought the shades, and found Aides sitting lonely on his throne, with his three headed hound beside him, mourning

that Persephone would not be comforted And when he saw the mother weeping, and the two fair women clasped in each other's arms, Aides sighed and bade his bride go earthward if she would, and for six months, she should dwell in the sunlight, and for six months should reign in her husband's halls, so should the earth be no longer sorrowful, and famine should be scourged back to her icy cave

And so it was. And each spring Persephone comes back to the earth and the flowers spring up to greet her, and the full ear and the golden fruit ripen under Demeter's smile as she dwells by her daughter's side. And when harvest is over, and Demeter has showered on mankind her blessed gifts, then Persephone quits the light of the sun and seeks her husband's realms, dwelling in peace therein while the wild winds of autumn storm, and the snow and rain come down; and, winter over and gone, her voice from below wakes the violets and the snow-drops, her heralds, and when the cowslip bells are ringing, Persephone lifts her face to meet her mother's kiss

THE FIRST ROSES

A Christian Legend

Towards the wide market-place of an eastern City streamed a hurrying crowd. The hot rays of the sun blazed down on city and people, and lighted up angry, cruel, and enquiring faces, all turned in one direction—the central point of the square.

"Who is she?" "What has she done?" "Where did they find her?" The questions were heard all through the crowd, and the answer was always the same. "She has committed a crime, and she is rightly punished."

And there in the midst of the crowd was raised a high pile of wood, and on the top, in the middle of the pile, stood a young girl, and round her several priests urging her to confess her crime before she died. For this was her story:

Rosetta was a peasant girl, living with her old grandmother, and her face was very fair. Large, dark eyes had she, and curved, full, eastern lips; and one day as she leant idly on the edge of the fountain,

resting a moment ere she carried home her freshly-filled water pitcher, a young man riding by checked his horse to speak with her, and her sweet voice and gentle manner caught his fancy, and he carried her heavy pitcher to her cottage-home, and she thanked him softly, and he went his way But he could not forget the girl leaning on the grey stone wall of the fountain, with the dull red pitcher outlined against the prickly cactus leaves

So the young man came often to the fountain-side, and often carried home the pitcher, and said soft words to the aged woman in the cottage for love of her dark-eyed grandchild, and at last he prayed Rosetta to marry him, and Rosetta would not, for she loved her pretty cottage-home and her grandmother, who had none save her, and the youth went away, angry and threatening mischief

And so it befell that one summer evening as Rosetta went fountainwards, as usual, to fill her pitcher, she was suddenly seized by some armed men, who carried her away by force, in spite of all her weeping and crying for mercy, and they shut her up in a castle belonging to the youth, who was of high rank and wealth For some weeks they coaxed her and bribed her with presents to love the wicked youth, and when she would not they beat her and threatened to kill her, and at last they took her and carried her away to the great neighbouring town, and they bribed bad men to accuse her of a great crime,

and she was tried and found guilty So she was condemned to be burned alive in the middle of the great market-place, for that was the cruel punishment their laws commanded

So came it that Rosetta stood on the pile in the market-place, and that so many had crowded round to see her die But Rosetta persisted that she had done no wrong, and that she was innocent, not guilty, so at last the priests let her alone, and bade them set light to the dry wood, and as the soldiers approached Rosetta's voice was heard calling aloud for help to Mary, the fair Queen of Heaven, the sweet Mother of God "O Mary, Mother, that sittest with the moon under thy feet and the seven stars round thy head, help and rescue thy child! Thou knowest my innocence, Help, O Mother of God!"

The wood caught, and the fire crept crackling upwards Rosetta saw the tongues of flame darting towards her, and shrank back and hid her face Suddenly there was a great shout, and when she opened her eyes she saw beside her a messenger from Mary, white-robed, with great rainbow hued wings, and he smiled into her troubled eyes Then, glancing timidly downwards, she saw no flames, but red and white roses all round her feet and his, for wherever the flame had kindled the wood red roses blossomed, and where the dead ashes had been white roses gleamed "And those were the first roses, both white and red, that ever any man saw"

Perhaps some of the children would like the story in rhyme

The Sun blazed down on the Syrian town,
And the serried crowds in the market-place,
Near the pile they raise, red torches blaze,
And a girl stands by—Christ! how fair of face!

Men had soiled her name with a deed of shame,
And the Judge had doomed her to death by flame,
Yet no fear was seen in her modest mien,
Her lips were firm and her glance serene,
While her face was alight with radiance bright—
Men had judged wrong, should not God judge right?
As over the crowd her soft tones swept,
There were some who cursed, and some who wept

"O Christ! of a maiden the spotless Child,
By Thy Virgin-Mother undefiled,
By her tears, when the tongues of men made free
With her maiden treasure, her chastity,
Hear me, a Maid! and give some token
That my foes have foully and falsely spoken,
That I come to Thine arms a Virgin, free
From the sin which I blush to name to Thee"

She ended The flames began to rise.
A flash of lightning flared from the skies
In that flash of lightning God's Angel came,
And back from the Virgin he rolled the flame.
The fire sank down at the touch of his feet,
And he left 'mid the ashes a token sweet,
For the pile of faggots was turned to flowers,
Roses still dewy from Eden's bowers;
Where the flame still smouldered the blooms were red,
And white were the flowers where the flame was dead.

The King, not knowing who had assumed the form of a fish, applied his mind to its preservation, and, having heard its very suppliant address, he kindly placed it in a small vase full of water But in a single night its bulk was so increased that it could not be contained in the jar, and it again addressed the gentle prince:

"I am not pleased with living miserably in this little vase, make me a larger mansion where I may dwell in comfort"

The King, moving it thence, placed it in the water of a cistern, but it grew four feet in less than fifty minutes, and said

"O King! it pleases me not to stay in this narrow cistern Since thou hast granted me an asylum, give me a spacious habitation"

He then removed it and placed it in a pool, where, having ample space around its body, it became a fish of considerable size

"This abode, O King, is not convenient for me, who must swim at large in the water, exert thyself for my safety, and remove me to a deep lake"

Thus addressed, Satyavrata threw the suppliant into a lake, and when it grew of equal bulk with that piece of water, he cast the vast fish into the sea When the fish was thrown into the waves, he thus again spoke to Satyavrata

"Here the horned sharks and other monsters of great strength will devour me Thou shouldst not O valiant man, leave me in this ocean"

Thus repeatedly deluded by the fish, who addressed him with gentle words, the king said

"Who art thou, that beguilest me in an assumed shape? Never before have I seen or heard of so prodigious an inhabitant of the waters, who like thee hast filled up in a single day a lake a hundred leagues in circumference Surely thou art the great Hari, whose dwelling is on the waves, and who now, in compassion to Thy servants, bearest the form of the natives of the deep!"

Hari, loving the good King who thus implored Him, and intending to save him from the sea of destruction caused by the depravity of the age, thus told him how he was to act

"In seven days from the present time, O good and merciful King, the three worlds will be plunged in an ocean of death, but in the midst of the destroying waves a large vessel, sent by me for thy use, shall stand before thee Then shalt thou take all medicinal herbs and all variety of seeds, and accompanied by seven others, encircled by pairs of all brute animals, thou shalt enter the spacious ark, and continue in it secure from the flood on one immense shoreless ocean When the ship shall be agitated by an impetuous wind, thou shalt fasten it with a large sea-serpent to my horn, for I will be near thee, drawing the vessel with thee and thy attendants"

Then Satyavrata put off his shoes in reverence, and went forth and called the chosen seven, and gathered

the seeds and the animals and, turning his face to the north, waited patiently

The sea, overwhelming the shores, deluged the whole earth, and it was soon seen to be increased by showers from immense clouds Satyavrata still waited, and he saw the vessel advancing and he entered in, he and all those who were with him Then Hari appeared in the form of a huge fish, blazing like gold, with one stupendous horn, and the King tied the ship to it with a cable made of a vast serpent, and so rode the waves in safety until the flood abated, and the earth was once more seen above the waves.

THE WANDERING JEW

A Legend

The sun was blazing down on the dusty streets of Jerusalem, and the air was quivering with heat. It was so hot that the pavement seemed to scorch the feet of the passers-by, and the gaunt hungry dogs, which were an abomination to the Jews, had not energy enough left to quarrel over the dried-up bones scattered over the arid Golgotha. It was as yet but eight in the morning; what would be the midday glow?

Despite the heat, groups of people were standing about the road, arguing and discussing vehemently among themselves, and amid these groups was one of six persons, whose voices rose aloud and sharp. A young and handsome man, dark-eyed and dark-bearded, was apparently pleading against the sharp denunciations of the others: "Low impostor!" "A mere juggler, deceiving the people!" "A King of madmen!" such were some of the epithets flung into the air by his opponents. "Come, Ahasuerus," at

last said the eldest of the group, "admit that you no more believe in this madman's claim than we do."

"Believe?" laughed he whom they addressed as Ahasuerus; "I believe? no, verily, but I regret that the poor madman should suffer death for his folly. The cross is an over-hard throne for so harmless a King as he."

As he spoke, yells and shouts were heard in the distance, and presently sounded the heavy tramp of the Roman soldiery, guarding three prisoners who were evidently being led to execution. Two of them walked doggedly along, stolid and indifferent, carrying the cross-bar to which they would presently be bound The third, pale and slender, with wan face and pitiful tortured eyes, bleeding and weak, was half supported by his guard, as he tottered onward amid the curses and yells of the crowd. As the procession reached the group of which Ahasuerus was one, the elder man who had addressed him pushed in front to gaze at the suffering Jesus, and the surge of the crowd pushed the twain forward somewhat roughly, so that the arm of Ahasuerus struck against the cross-bar carried by the prisoner, and the already half-fainting sufferer, overbalanced by the shock, fell heavily to the ground.

An ill-mannered burst of jeering laughter broke from the rough crowd as Jesus fell, and the proud young Pharisee, who had started forward to repair the mischief he had done, weakly shrank back,

ashamed of his generous impulse towards an outcast and a blasphemer. A sad look of reproach spoke from the eyes of the prostrate Jesus, as he marked the gesture of the withdrawal, and he spoke: "O thou who wilt not have mercy on the helpless, going to his death, thou shalt seek death, and shalt not find it; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be upon the earth."

Then the guard closed again round the prisoners, and the crowd surged onwards, till Golgotha, which was close at hand, was reached, and the three were raised on the cruel crosses to await the coming of King Death.

Now to the suffering and the weary death is sweet, and welcome is the touch that puts an end to pain; but to the young and the happy death is hateful, and Ahasuerus laughed as he wished lightly that the words of Jesus could come true, knowing not that, indeed, he was marked out from all men to be untouched by the grim King of Terrors, as the ignorant name Death.

Years passed on, and Ahasuerus had taken to himself a wife, and four fair children had been born to him—two sons, comely as Saul and David, and two daughters, beautiful as the rose of sharon and the lily of the valley. A good man was Ahasuerus, and beloved exceedingly of his family and of his neighbours, and his momentary shrinking back from aiding the fallen Jesus had been but the weakness of a young man's proud and foolish shyness

For a long while the Jews, ever a stiff-necked and riotous people, had been chafing against the yoke of the Roman rule, and at last, having broken into open rebellion, they found their city beleaguered by the Roman legions under Titus, and the engines of war trained against the citadel, on which stood their holy Temple Then the famine, awful and weird, stalked through the city, and men grew gaunt and women wasted under the pressure of the terrible want If any morsel of food were by chance found concealed, "the dearest friends fell afighting one with another about it, snatching from each other the most miserable supports of life Moreover, their hunger was so intolerable that it obliged them to chew everything, while they gathered such things as the most sordid animals would not touch, and endured to eat them, nor did they at length abstain from girdles and shoes, and the very leather which belonged to their shields they pulled off and gnawed, the very wisps of old hay became food to some" Then the sweet daughters of Ahasuerus slowly pined away, uncomplaining and smiling on their father to the last, and of his sons one was slain on the third wall by a stone slung by the Romans, and the other perished under the dagger of a zealot in the outer court of the Temple And his wife, his beloved, could now scarcely lift her head from her pillow, so weak was she with want and anguish of mind At last one day, as he knelt

beside her bed, his head bowed in agony over her in her dying struggles, the door was burst open, and in rushed robbers seeking for food like dogs "Ho!" shrieked one, "we shall find food here, a woman feigns to be dying, and doubtless food is concealed in her bosom for secret feasting" And they hurled Ahasuerus aside, and flung themselves on his dying wife, and tore open her linen robe and searched her bed, and, as he fainted, he heard her death-rattle, and the last sight that met her eyes was the glare of the brutal robber, and not the face of her husband, the beloved of her youth Yet was she better off than he, for whom Death would not call, for "those that were thus distressed by the famine were very desirous to die, and those already dead were esteemed happy, because they had not lived long enough either to hear or see such miseries"

Years passed on, and Ahasuerus, white-headed, lonely, and miserable, prayed in vain for death Jerusalem was in ashes, and his race was scattered. All his friends were dead, and no living face greeted his with friendship All that made his life was in the grave, and he, a wreck and a skeleton, wandered ghost-like over the tombs of his family and his nation The curse of Jesus had fallen, and Ahasuerus was alone in a world of strangers

Then he wandered into the deserts of Arabia, and made his abode in the wild mountains of that arid land And one day as he walked he found on his

path a zebra-colt but two days old, deserted by its mother, and since the gentle heart of mercy in him was not dead, he raised it in his arms and bore it to his cave, and fed it with warm milk from the ass which daily yielded him his food And he made him a fenced-in plot of pasturage for his captured prize, and fondled it and fed it with his own hands, and at night he led it within his cave and it slept beside his couch, for he said "The wild thing will learn to love me, and will look at me with eyes that are not strange" Thus for months he tended it, till he believed it tame and faithful, and it would come at his call, and arch its glossy neck under his gentle hand. Then Ahasuerus would almost smile, and his weary, lonely heart found pleasure even in the brute he had saved from death and tended as a child. But one day, *in the far distance, rang the trample of wild hoofs,* and Simon, his zebra, threw up his head and listened, and trotted forward a little way and listened yet again Then Ahasuerus, fearful of losing his pet, ran swiftly to catch and hold it, blaming himself that he had forgotten the wild untameable nature of the zebra type, and had left his pet unloosed But Simon sniffed the air, and he heard the tramp of his kindred, and the smell of the desert steeds was borne to him on the wind Then the inherited instincts of his race awoke in him, and he forgot his master's tendance and his master's love, and with a plunge he turned, and, flinging up his heels, he smote Ahasuerus to the

ground and galloped wildly away, leaving the Jew senseless on the sand, to awake once more, to loneliness, unbroken even by the caress of a brute friend.

Years passed on, and generations of men had lived and died, and still Ahasuerus lived, forgotten by Death, until at last a weary numbness lapped him, and neither pain nor joy seemed to touch him into real life He had wandered far and wide over the earth, and with dull indifferent eyes he watched the loves and hates, the fears and hopes of men, but they seemed so far away from him in their beautiful common lives and peaceful deaths that he could have no brotherhood with them, nor find in aught of theirs anything that could melt his frozen heart For Ahasuerus had not yet learned that by losing his life in that of others he might win back something of joy into his own, and that the curse which had been launched at him could only be overcome by love

During these long years, these long centuries of travel, Ahasuerus had passed through many a peril, and through many an adventure that would have ended in death, could death have touched him He had been whelmed under a sand storm in the desert, and had swooned under the stifling red-hot sand, but alas! he came back painfully to life, and the life stretched out before him as endless as the dry sand all around He had been wrecked, and had seen his fellows sink down into the green waves to slumber, but he had been cast up, buffeted, bruised, and broken,

but still living, on a desert-island in the midst of the wild Atlantic waves. He had been lost on the vast steppes of Tartary, and had been left for dead by a horde of Tartars, who had swept by him on their small white steeds, and who had flung their javelins at him in answer to his cry for water, and had galloped on laughing, as they saw him fall, pierced by a light sharp spear.

And now he had found his weary way to England and there had met with but ill welcome and scanty comfort, for the Jews were hated exceedingly by the Christian populace, and small mercy was shown to any who called Abraham their father. Yet, when the cruel decree was issued which drove every Jew off English soil, Ahasuerus would not depart; for he said: "What skills it whether I go or stay, since for me all lands are full of weariness, and there is no end to my sorrow?" So he stayed and abode in England, living chiefly in the wild forest lands, afar from the homes of men. Now it came to the time when Henry IV was King of England, and when for the first time stakes were lighted on English soil at which they burned men's bodies living, that they might save their souls when dead. And Ahasuerus stood in the midst of the crowd in London town, and saw poor William Sautre burned alive, while Christian priests stood around him and a Christian mob shouted and jeered. Then a look of grief and painful memory came over the worn face of the deathless man, and he

murmured as he turned away "Verily, times are changed, but men remain the same, I bethink me when crowds like these jeered and yelled at the very man in whose name they burn this to-day"

And then, because he was weary and thirsty, he sat him down by a well, and by-and by a maiden came singing to draw water, and gazed timidly and curiously, as a fawn grazes, longing to draw near, yet fearing peril in the approach And as he lifted on her his eyes, behind which an everlasting sadness dwelt, he started, and he thought "Surely the eyes of my Salome look at me from the sweet face of this young girl" And back upon him like a torrent swept the memory of his youth, and of the days when he walked with his beloved beneath the whispering grey leaves of the olive-trees near Bethany, and the leaves chanted to them low of the eternity of love, and never a word of the eternity of life, while lo! to him love had been so fleeting, while life, like a sluggard, would not move from his tired heart And as he remembered the wife of his youth, Ahasuerus bowed over the wall of the silent well, and he shook as shakes an oak of Lebanon when the storm-wind sweeps across the Syrian sea

Then all fear left the girl's sweet heart, for here was one who was sad and whom she might comfort, and she drew near and laid her little hand on the bowed-down head

"Stranger," she said, and her voice was as the sound of a Syrian viol, sweet and full and clear, "you are in trouble Can I do aught for your relief?"

And she drew the cool pure water, and bathed his throbbing head and his tired arid eyes And afterwards, each day she would come to the woodland well, and Ahasuerus would meet her there, and would tell her stories of far-off lands, and of wondrous adventures and perilous escapes, and would bring her from time to time strange jewel or curious web of eastern lands, to please her girlish pride Now this sweet Editha was orphaned, and lived in a lonely cottage near at hand, with her grandfather, who was old and blind And it chanced that one day she failed in her trust, and on a second and third she was not there

And on the fourth, as Ahasuerus sat there, feeling for the first time for many a hundred years a chill aching pain that cramped his heart, and thinking "She is gone, like all the rest," Editha was seen coming down the glade, not blithely, as was her wont, but full sadly, for she was weeping as she came Yet Ahasuerus felt at the sight of her a throb that he would have thought was one of joy, had not joy and he so long been strangers that he scarcely remembered how it felt And Editha told him how, two days since, in the even-tide, her grandfather had suddenly fallen, and when she ran to lift him he was dead, and now she was alone, "all alone in this wide world"

Alone?—the word went to his heart like a stab And now from the pain he knew his heart had awaked, though he doubted of the joy, and the pain grew keener as he contrasted his awful age and this fair bright youth, though he knew she dreamed not of the years that lay behind him. And when Editha moaned amid her sobs, "I have none to care for me but you," he clasped his arms round her, and whispered he would care for her and guard her life if she would join it with his own And so they two were wed, and Editha wist not that her husband was other than he seemed, a somewhat stern and elderly man

But to him she had brought back life, and he felt with a strange sweet delight that now again he could feel both joy and pain, and that some share of the common lot was again at last his own Alas! the new delight lasted for brief space, for, having been drawn back to the abodes of men, one day the eye of the village priest knew him not, and he spoke to him with angry suspicion And he, carelessly, forgetting the cruel laws that men had made, answered that he worshipped not in the Christian Church Then the angry priest bade them seize the infidel, and clap him into the village stocks, while he sent to the neighbouring town to give warning of the heretic he had found

Then they flung him on the ground, and, raising his feet above his head, thrust them through the holes, and left him there, with three others who shared his

punishment, but in lighter form, for one was a murderer, and one was a thief, and one had forged his father's name, but he was a vile infidel, who had blasphemed the Christian faith. And in those days it was deemed worse to think differently from one's neighbour, than to kill, or rob or forge. For ever has the bigoted Christian punished heresy as worse than crime.

From the stocks Ahasuerus was carried into prison, and after trial and torture he was sentenced to death. And oh! what was his agony and despair when they led him out to die, and he found that he was not alone in the rough cart, but there was lifted in beside him his Editha, who was marked, as a convicted witch, to death by flames. And she, instead of weeping, was joyous, in that, as she whispered, death should not part them; but he shuddered, for he feared that his darling would die *alone*.

As they went, the cruel priest who had brought them to this pass urged on them ceaselessly to kiss the cross and to believe in Christ. And Ahasuerus smiled mockingly at the priest and his emblem, and at last grimly bade him leave in peace the burnt offerings he was carrying to his God.

And so they fared forward to the stake, and bound them side by side to the central post and heaped the faggots round them. Then Ahasuerus, who had stealthily loosed one hand, slipped it into his bosom as the smoke rolled thickly around them, and drawing

out a tiny ball placed it in Editha's mouth, and bidding her bite it, breathed a passionate farewell And in that ball was a subtle eastern poison, and with a shiver she was dead, and spared the agony of the flames. But they rolled up round her husband, scorching, soaring, till he swooned with agony and hung as dead. Then burst over the common where the stake had been raised a fearful storm And the fierce lightning and the pouring rain drove away both guards and people, and mist and fog swept across the plain And Ahasuerus awoke again, to find himself lying on the half burned faggots, awoke to agony of pain, and, worse than pain, to life, while beside him lay the scorched body of his beloved, whom merciful Death had taken, while he was left again alone

Years passed on, and again generations of men lived and died, and still Ahasuerus lived, forgotten by death, but since the old weary numbness had been healed by Editha's love, he had never fallen back into that death in life It had passed away for ever when love had touched him into self forgetfulness, and he had placed in Editha's mouth the poison that would have saved him from the agony of the flames, had he thought of himself first, ere shielding his beloved. And indeed, since he had roused himself to love of a woman, the old dull weariness had passed out of life, for love is the true saviour of men, and those who love loyally enter the "earthly paradise"

But even yet in this love of Ahasuerus for Editha was there touch of selfishness, as in all save the noblest human love. One stage higher yet had this man to climb, ere he touched the sacred portal on the other side of which was rest. And it came on this wise:

One day Ahasuerus wandered along the streets of London, no longer with dull intelligence, but with eyes soft with sympathy for human grief, and in their depths a sorrow which none might share. And he wandered on till the evening darkened around him, and still onwards, until at last the hour came at which the gin-palaces and the public-houses were closed, and the narrow streets in which he found himself were filled with a tossing crowd of half-drunken men and women. Ahasuerus looked at these poor unfortunates with eyes luminous with pity and with sorrow, and both deepened as the eyes rested on a group of man, woman, and child, a father, mother, and daughter. The father was mad with drink, the mother helpless, and the little child, with its violet eyes terror-widened, its sweet curled mouth down-drawn in grief, clung sobbing to the ragged skirt of the miserable mother, shrinking from the voice and gesture of the poor wretch whom she called "daddy," in broken babyish appeal. There was a delay, a brawl, a sudden heavy blow, a falling woman, a child crushed in the falling, a confusion of crowding sight-seers, a policeman seizing a maddened man, some

rough but kindly hands lifting a fainting woman—and Ahasuerus had gently raised the broken blossom of a child and had quietly carried away the helpless waif, unknowing whether it were alive or dead None cared, none noticed A few weeks later, and the mother was dead, the father suffering a sentence of penal servitude, and the poor little child, orphaned and alone, remained in the gentle hands that had rescued her, and there was none to say "Yield her to me, for she is mine" And in good sooth—though this was known to none save to the dead and the felon—this sweet child was none of theirs, but was a baby stolen from a pure and honest home, where mourning had been worn for five years for a babe that had vanished and had left no trace

So Ahasuerus kept the little one, and he named her Editha Salome, remembering in his faithful heart the two fair women whom he had loved in the bygone time And the child grew and became sweet as a violet, pure as a snow-drop, and she grew into fairest womanhood, unsullied by an evil thought, unawed by fear Thus she developed into womanhood, and her violet eyes were as frank and innocent as when she had numbered but seven years, and the broad white brow and square lines of chin told of brain to think and firmness to endure

And slowly in the heart of Ahasuerus there grew up a love for this peerless maiden that was love of father and brother and lover in one, and his whole

PERSEUS THE SAVIOUR

A Legend of Greece

Wroth was King Acrisius for the words that the prophet had spoken: "Ho! King Acrisius, Ruler of Argos in Hellas! Thou hast slain thine own, and of thine own shall one slay thee! Behold, a virgin shall bear a son, even the virgin Danae thy daughter, and he shall grow up to rule this fair land in the strength of Zeus his father, and men shall rejoice in his righteous sway, and his just and merciful rule."

Now Acrisius was an evil man and cruel, and was hated by all around him, and his hard heart grew harder at the prophet's words. And he bade them make a tower of brass, wherein there should be but one heavy door, and he put Danae therein, and of the door he himself kept the brazen key. And he laughed in his cruel heart as he thought how he had made impossible the fulfilment of the prophecy of the messenger of Zeus. But Zeus on high Olympus laughed louder than Acrisius, and changing himself into a shower of gold (for all Gods can change

themselves into what shape they will) he fell down into Danae's lap, and the power of the Highest overshadowed her, and she bore a son

Then Acrisius the cruel took her, with her fair man-child in her arms, and thrust her into a box, which he bade make just large enough to bear them on the water, and the box was pushed away from the shore, sail-less and rudderless, and it floated to sea, away from the smiling vale of Argos and the sweet sunlit slopes of Hellas. But Zeus watched over the mother and son, and sent them favouring winds and fair weather, and to Danae he sent sweet sleep as she floated onwards over the smooth blue sea And at last the box, drifting went on shore on the isle called Seriphos, and when Danae woke she found strange faces around her, looking at her with wonder, at this fair white woman whom Neptune had brought to their coasts And they lifted her out of the box, and brought her to Dictys, the brother of Polydectes, King of Seriphos, and Dictys and his wife took her and her babe home to their hearts, and for fifteen years she dwelt with them, and all loved her for her sweet face and gentle ways

Now they called the lad, so strangely saved from the sea, Perseus, and Dictys trained him in all knowledge and wisdom, and in all manly exercises, for the Greeks loved strength and swiftness and the bold heart, and trained their young men sternly and right

heart fixed itself on this child he had saved, this maiden he had trained, this woman he worshipped And the time came when he told the sweet lassie of his love, and innocently, trustfully, she put her hand in his and promised, unknowing a faith and love of whose meaning she had not dreamed

And now the spring months, ripening into summer, brought with them in their ending a youth, fair and strong, into the village in which dwelt Ahasuerus and the maiden he had reared And one morning, very early, ere yet the dew-drops had stolen all the fairy seven colours from the grass blades and had left them only green for adornment—Editha wandered over the daisy starred meadows, and met this youth, Reginald, on his morning stroll Little worth to trace how meeting led to acquaintance, and acquaintance to love, until the hour came when the sweet violet eyes grew dull with pain, and the soft round cheeks were feverish with the passion that adored and the resolution that denied Little worth to trace the slow agony of Ahasuerus, who saw his love won from him, and knew that the pallid cheeks and the sweet wistful eyes told him of the loyalty of years struggling against the passion of a month, and of the resolute honour that kept pure its faith though the gentle heart should break in the determination to be true

He saw And for awhile he wrapped himself up in sore grief and pain, and wrestled with his own heart for mastery Then at length the strife was over, and

with the victory that gave Editha to her lover and accepted loneliness for himself, a strange languor crept over frame and thought

Ahasuerus had conquered in his final struggle In renunciation he had triumphed, and the fair grave face of Death shone on him out of the darkness Love at its noblest brought him rest, and the lesson of the Nazarene was learned

He called to him his darling, he told her of her discovered secret of his grateful recognition of her loyal struggle, of his approval of her choice, of his blessing on her love The wondering violet eyes were raised dew laden and flashed into glorious beauty, as though the sun rays had touched them Ahasuerus raised his voice, and at the call Reginald entered, pure-faced, upright, strong—fit mate for the maiden he loved

There was a pause Ahasuerus seemed to have grown very old, his eyes were dim, but on his face rested a strange, silent, massive calm. His voice sounded out for the last time on earth, as he clasped together the hands of the woman he loved and surrendered, and of the man, his rival, whom he crowned the last words were words of blessing and they slew the words of the curse that had pursued him

The wandering Jew was dead

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well. And Perseus grew towards manhood, beautiful and strong and gentle, and obeyed Dictys in all things, and worshiped Danae his mother, as did all true sons of Hellas in those simple noble days.

Now Perseus was sent to Samos in a trading vessel, and while he waited there one fair summer day, he rambled on the white cliffs, and lying on the grass there he gazed across the sea which laughed below. And as he looked, behold a wonder! For swiftly through the air, as though her feet trod the solid earth, glided without step a woman, tall and beautiful; on her head was a burnished helm and she carried a long sharp spear in her left hand, while her right hand bore a shield that shone in the sunlight as she came, and beside her floated the sacred birds. Then Perseus knew her for Pallas Athene, and he fell on his face and worshipped her.

Then Pallas spake, and her voice rang like a silver clarion across the sea: "*Perseus, two paths lie before you*; choose you which you will tread. On the one walk men base and low, careless of all save themselves. Like swine they live in plenty and in sloth; like swine they fatten, lying idly in the sun; like swine they die and go down to Hades, and their names are forgotten ere they have crossed the Styx. On the other walk the heroes, beloved of Gods and men; they fight all monsters and all evil things, and rid the land of all tyrants and oppressors; they are wounded, and they suffer heat and cold, hunger and

thirst, weariness and pain, but at last, when the Fates cut their life-thread, they go open eyed and fearless to their end, and their names shine as the stars forever, to lighten the hearts of living men with the brilliance of noble deeds Now choose you, Perseus of Argos, choose you which path you will tread"

Then Perseus sprang to his feet with joy, as do all brave young souls touched by the fire of aspiration, and he stretched out his arms to Pallas Athene, and cried aloud "Let me tread the path of suffering and toil and glory, O Athene, wisest of the Immortals, for to live the life of the swine is not for men, but the hero who toils for man and wars against all evil things is noble in his life and honoured in his death Give me work, O Pallas Athene, and prove me now, whether I be hero or a swine at heart."

Then Pallas smiled gravely and gently on the youth, and again her words rang out "Go home, Perseus, and learn a hero's work in doing the labour that is nearest to hand, and in your sorest need cry aloud to me, and I will aid you"

And as he bowed his head at her feet, she passed away, and when he looked up she had vanished, and only a gleam of sunshine over the broad blue sea seemed to mark the road where-over she had gone.

Then Perseus rose slowly, and went silently back to his ship, but his grey eyes were steady and his mouth was firm, and as the sailors saw that the boy had

passed into the man, and beheld the grey eyes looking steadfastly out to sea, they whispered among themselves "Surely the son of Zeus has seen of his kindred, and will prove not unworthy of his Sire"

And when he reached home, he found his mother weeping, for Polydectes, the King, had taken her by force from Dictys, and had made her his slave Then straight to Polydectes he strode, leading his mother by the hand, and in his wrath he spake aloud and rebuked the King for the evil he had done And when Polydectes drew his sword and would have killed him, he twisted it from his hand and raised it and for a moment thought to slay the evil King But he remembered that Dictys had sheltered him, and he would not spill the blood of Dictys' brother, so he mastered his wrath, and broke the sword in twain across his knee and, throwing the pieces at Polydectes' feet, he spake no word, but turned, laughing, and went forth, leading his mother with him, and he took her to the temple of Pallas Athene, and bade her serve there till he could bring her home in honour and safety, and then returned to Dictys' house to see what would befall

But a few weeks passed over ere the trial of Perseus came For Polydectes, being an evil man, plotted against the bold youth who had defied him, and when one of his councillors whispered to him, "Send the boy away with charge to bring you back Medusa's head, and you will never see him more,"

Polydectes lent a ready ear, and rejoiced that he might thus rid him of his foe

He called Perseus to him, and praised his strength and courage, and the skill of his cunning hand, till the young man's heart beat high at the words of praise And presently Polydectes grew silent, and once or twice he sighed heavily, and then turned aside, saying, "No, to ask him would be sending him to his death" Then Perseus flushed and cried aloud "O King, is there aught you would have done? Lo! I am here, send me!" But Polydectes answered craftily as a man curbs back a willing horse while he spurs it secretly "Nay, my brave boy, but I spake in thoughtlessness and in folly No mortal man may dare the toil that lies heavy on my soul" Perseus fell at the King's feet, and said "Now, by Zeus who sits on high Olympus, and by the sacred head of my mother saved from the water by your mother's son, tell me your will, O King, and I will do it or die in the attempt"

Then shot an evil glance forth from the eyes of Polydectes, and he said "I accept your oath Know that I yearn for the head of Medusa the Gorgon, once the fairest of all fair women, whose locks are now of hissing serpents, and whose eyes turn to stone all who dare to meet them What say you, Perseus the gallant? Will you keep the oath you have sworn, or will you spit on your slave-mother's head?"

Now the cheek of Perseus had turned pale when he heard of the King's wild errand, but at the last words of jeer and scoff he sprang to his feet and spake, for the spirit of Pallas Athene was upon him, and his father Zeus gave him courage and a man's heart "Yea, King, cruel and deceitful, I will keep my oath and the honour of my mother's sacred head And when I return with the head of the Gorgon, we will see if Death has robbed the Medusa-eyes of their power"

And he turned and went out proudly, and, going to the temple of Pallas Athene, he kissed his mother lovingly, but told her no word of his errand, and wended his way down to the sea, and there he took ship and sailed to Samos, and climbed to the high cliff whereto Pallas Athene had come, and he cried aloud across the sea

"Pallas! Pallas Athene! hear me! In the hour of my sorest need I cry to thee for help!" And seven times he cried aloud, and seven times no answer came to him, save the seamew's shriek and the lapping of the waves below Then Perseus cried aloud no more, but sat patiently waiting, his face covered with his hands And presently a cool wind blew upon his face, and looking up he saw the mighty Goddess gazing at him with her keen grey eyes.

Then her voice came like music to his ears, "Lo! Perseus of Argos, I am come at your cry, and the hero's path lies open before you Long is the way

and many the dangers ere you reach the spot where Medusa lies in pain, and when you reach her you must meet the worse danger of her eyes, that turn all living things to stone And now I must arm you for the conflict Bind on these winged sandals of Hermes, which shall bear you swift as the heron and straight as the shaft of Diana And gird on the sword that comes from Olympus, which Hephaistos has tempered in his smithy And on your head place this cap of darkness, the wearer of which can be seen by none, so that you may approach the Gorgon or ever she knows you are there And on your arm bind fast my brazen shield that reflects all things faithfully and cannot lie, and when Medusa is near, lift up your shield as a mirror and gaze therein, and strike at the image you shall see Then wrap the accursed head in my sacred goat-skin and hie thee back to Seriphos, and place arms and head in my temple there, when Polydectes shall have taken his fill of gazing thereon"

And with these words she vanished, and Perseus, binding on sandals and sword and shield, sprang into the air and flew forward as the sandals bore him swiftly above the sea.

So for many a day he journeyed, and bore hunger and thirst, and heat and bitter cold, until at length he reached the awful spot where Medusa lay in pain, and dropped softly through the air behind her that he might not see her eyes. Then he walked slowly

round, gazing at his shield, till he saw her face reflected therein, and her locks of venomous snakes, and her awful eyes of anguish and despair And, shuddering, he struck full at her bare white neck, and the snakes' heads fell down hissing, and the foul black blood poured forth, and he caught the head up and wrapped it in the goat-skin hurriedly, and sprang aloft, hard-breathing, into the air

Now, how Perseus travelled homewards again, how he saved a fair maiden from a huge sea dragon, how Polydectes and his evil counsellors gazed at Medusa's head and were turned to stone, how he took his mother home and kept her in high honour till her death, how he fought against tyrants, and slew all evil beasts, and gave peace and safety to the people, you may all read in the grand old Greeian tale So he lived nobly and died calmly, and left his story to be loved by all who admire brave, daring, and generous deeds

A smile of gratified pride and pleasure irradiated the old man's face, softening the somewhat stern lines of brow and chin

"It is well, Hypatia," he answered "So shall my strength lean on thy young fresh power, and my pupils shall learn yet more swiftly from the lips of the brightest ornament of my school"

And then Theon, the famous mathematician, who had raised to unrivalled position the noble Platonic school of Alexandria, drew his child down beside him on the soft rich cushions whereon she had been awaiting his coming, and they talked long and earnestly of the morrow's work For on the morrow Hypatia was to take her place as teacher in the great Platonic school and to face the youth of Alexandria for the first time as preceptress And well was she fitted for the task, for she was versed in all the knowledge of her day, and none could teach her aught in geometry or in astronomy, or in the science of the time And so deeply had she drunk of the springs of "divine philosophy" that she seemed to those who had been her instructors to be Platonism itself incarnate, and it was thought no shame to ask her to teach in the mighty school wherein Ammonius and Hierocles had held sway, and to which came students from Greece, and from imperial Rome itself

And truly Hypatia justified the faith of her father and of her tutors, for we read "that her fame became so great that the votaries of philosophy crowded to

Alexandria from all parts" And so pure was she, so gentle, and yet so proud, that no word of blame or censure was ever heard against her in the market-place or in the baths of Alexandria

Unhappily it chanced at that time that the patriarchal chair of Alexandria was filled by a bishop named Cyril, a man haughty and bitterly intolerant He was surrounded by hordes of savage monks and priests, who fanned the gloomy fire of his hatred against all noble learning and scientific thought And as the fame of Hypatia's learning spread abroad, and the youth of Alexandria crowded more and more into her lecture-room, and as some who had been attendants at the churches now gathered in the hall where she taught the Platonic philosophy, Cyril determined in his dark mind that this rival should be destroyed, and should no longer be allowed to shed abroad the rays of the pure light of knowledge

And first he tried to convert her to his gloomy faith, for greater than the triumph of slaying her would have been the triumph of immuring her bright keen brain in the dungeon of superstition, and of quenching the glory of her intellect under the extinguisher of faith But the "load of learning" which she 'bore lightly as a flower" made it impossible for her to pass through the narrow barbaric gate of his creed, and the keen dialectic exposed the clumsy sophisms of the monks he sent to convert her Then he determined that she should die, and calling to him Peter

the Reader, a sour and brutal fanatic, he bade him take with him a band of the roughest and wildest of the savage monks, and slay "this child of the devil," even as she was returning from her daily task of lecturing in the schools.

So Peter went forth and whispered first to one and then to another; and he told how Hypatia was followed by a devil wherever she went, and how this devil gave her her beauty and her cunning tongue; and how she was destroying the souls of the simple Alexandrian people by her blasphemies and her false philosophy. And gradually the throng of monks grew larger and larger, and Peter deftly led them to a narrow street through which Hypatia must pass. And many of them had in their hands large oyster shells, for a whisper had gone round that the witch's flesh should be scraped off her bones, so that none of her incantations should avail to save her.

And now, see, a young monk comes running swiftly, and gasps as he runs—"She is close at hand." And in a moment her chariot appears and the fair face is still glowing with the excitement of oratory, and the deep eyes are luminous with the glory of the mind. And now a cry and a surge forward of the crowd and Hypatia's chariot is surrounded by fierce faces and tossing arms, and in a moment the horses are stopped, and as she rises, startled, from her seat, the wiry arms of Peter drag the girl down brutally. Her dream is broken, and

for the reverent faces of her listeners she sees the fierce swarthy faces of Thebaid monks, and as she glances over the howling crowd not a friendly eye meets hers

"To the Church! to the Church!" cry the torturers, "and let us offer the witch before the high altar of our God!" And Peter rushes onwards, dragging the half-fainting girl, and the monks surge onwards also, with many a curse and prayer And now the great Church of Alexandria is reached, and up the aisles, on to the very steps of the high altar, from which the crucified Christ looked down on his worshippers, Peter, panting and furious, dragged his unresisting victim There for an instant Hypatia shook herself free, and looked over the tossing sea of arms and faces, and opened her mouth as though to speak 'Her white robe was stained and soiled with that terrible journey, but her face was sweet and serene and strong, and her voice rolled out melodiously over the throng of her foes. But scarcely had the tones rung round the Church, when Peter, fearing that her eloquence might turn the mob from his purpose, yelled out

"She is a witch! a witch! do not listen to her sorceries. I see the devil at her ear, whispering to her She is a witch!"

And flinging himself on her, he rent her robe from neck to hem, and tore wildly at her clothes, till they fell in ribbons at her feet, and the tall white girl's

form stood naked, dazzling as snow, before the golden altar. And a cry burst from her lips at last, as she stood thus bare before that brutal throng.

And the great dumb Christ looked on.

Then the monks flew at her and beat her, and wrenched out handfuls of her glorious golden hair, and tore her flesh with their nails like wild beasts. And those with shells scraped away her flesh till the bones were visible, and all her body was one gaping dreadful wound. Then they tore her limb from limb, and cried to bring fire to burn the witch to ashes.

And the great dumb Christ looked on.

And at last they gathered wood outside the door, and flung the pieces of her body on the pile, and set a light to it, and sang hymns round the witch's funeral fire, until nought but ashes were left, and these they scattered to the wind and went home rejoicing in their evil work.

And that night Cyril slept soundly, for his rival would no longer draw away his hearers. And Peter slept deeply, for he had drunk himself stupid after his crime. But many of the monks had troubled dreams, and wondered whether indeed their day's work were a righteous one.

And in the dark Church there were pools of blood, and remnants of human flesh and tangled golden hair.

And the great dumb Christ looked on.

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